



General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
27 October 2006

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 8th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 12 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Acharya (Nepal)
later: Mr. Andersson (Vice-Chairman) (Sweden)

Contents

Agenda item 30: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space
(continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-56662 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Agenda item 30: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (continued) (A/61/20)

1. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that space science and technology and other applications should contribute positively to the collective well-being of humankind. Her Government acknowledged the role of space science and technology training centres and therefore supported the work carried out by the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Latin America and the Caribbean. One objective of the Regional Geospace Technology Telecentre, based in Bogotá, was the strengthening of cooperation projects in the Andean region. The Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) had also focused on the development of national capacities so that all States could use and benefit from space science and technology. In July 2005, her Government had established the Colombian Space Commission with a view to preparing national policies for the development and application of space technologies.
2. It was important to establish a clear legal framework for promoting the peaceful uses of outer space and space activities should be aimed at improving living conditions. To that end, her Government had organized symposiums on global satellite navigation systems that focused on applications in cartography, agriculture and navigation. The danger of an arms race in outer space was a great concern, as was the issue of pollution of outer space by space debris. It was also essential to maintain the principle of rational and equitable access for all States to the geostationary orbit.
3. The proclamation of the International Heliophysical Year 2007 would assist in focusing attention on the importance of international cooperation in the field of solar-terrestrial physics. After hosting the Fourth Space Conference of the Americas in 2002, her Government had continued to engage in international cooperation with a view to achieving the goals of the 2002 Cartagena de Indias Declaration. While serving as the Conference's Pro Tempore Secretariat, it had signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA) in April 2003.
4. **Ms. Kanerva** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, said that the peaceful use of outer space and the use of space applications could be of great benefit to all humankind and could promote sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Space science and technology could contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Space was a unique environment that was not subject to claims of national sovereignty. It was the responsibility of all States to ensure that the right to explore outer space and enjoy the benefits was exercised in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and that an arms race in outer space was prevented. Great importance was attached to the work done by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), which should establish practical mechanisms for coordinating its work with that of other related United Nations bodies. The COPUOS proposal to set up a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) was a positive development.
5. The increasing commercialization of outer space demanded attention and appropriate international and national legal frameworks. Special attention should also be paid to the increasing pollution of outer space by man-made and natural space debris, although some progress had been made in that regard through the work of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee, COPUOS, the European Space Agency (ESA) and several European Union countries.
6. Continued international cooperation in the field of space science and technology was essential. The European Union had engaged in important international cooperation in the field of Earth observation by means of the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) initiative and in the field of space technology by developing its own global satellite navigation system, Galileo. ESA had cooperated closely in the development of GMES and Galileo and played a worldwide role. An important

milestone would be achieved when Europe's first polar-orbiting weather satellite, MetOp-A, was launched on 17 October 2006 through a joint programme of ESA and the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (Eumetsat). Following the strong consensus achieved in General Assembly resolutions 60/66 on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities and 60/54 on prevention of an arms race in outer space, there was a growing convergence of views on the elaboration of measures to strengthen transparency, confidence and security.

7. *Mr. Andersson (Sweden), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

8. **Ms. Hernández Toledano (Cuba)** said that over the past five decades the gap between developed and developing countries in terms of space technology capacities had increased, making it increasingly difficult for developing countries to benefit from space research and its applications. The right of all States to explore and use outer space for the benefit of humankind was a universally accepted legal principle. However, the fact was that not all countries had equitable access to space technology because of its cost. It was therefore vitally important to increase bilateral and multilateral cooperation as called for in General Assembly resolution 51/122. Her Government advocated the establishment of legal rules to promote the rational use of the geostationary orbit by all States. Access to remote sensing data and the capacity to use remote sensing technology must be expanded. Cuba continued to make modest progress in using space science and technology for, inter alia, the improvement of weather forecasting, the application of remote sensing to the mapping of vegetation cover and the prevention of fires, the study of space sciences and teaching.

9. Her delegation reaffirmed the need to defend space on the basis of three principles: the preservation of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes in a way that promoted international cooperation and universal economic development, the rejection of plans to deploy weapons in outer space and the adoption of new monitoring and verification mechanisms for space law. The current legal framework applicable to outer space was insufficient to guarantee the prevention of an arms race in outer space and her Government believed that the Conference on Disarmament should

lead the way in urgently negotiating a multilateral agreement on the subject.

10. **Mr. Gidor (Israel)** said that his Government had made great efforts to cooperate with other States and international agencies in promoting the peaceful uses of outer space and had made progress in a number of projects of benefit to the international community. Its space-related activities reflected the COPUOS agenda. The Israel Space Agency (ISA) had been established in 1983 and Israel's OFEQ-1 satellite had been launched in 1988. Its first EROS satellite, developed in conjunction with a United States company, had been launched in 2000 and five Israeli-made satellites were currently orbiting the Earth.

11. Israel continued to use its technological advantages in certain niches, notably small, sophisticated satellites, space propulsion, the global positioning system (GPS) for ground applications and satellite-based technologies such as remote sensing. Israeli academic and research institutes and private companies had played an active role in enhancing international cooperation by establishing a variety of research programmes on remote sensing, an advanced hyper-spectral system and dust storms. In addition, they had been actively engaged in exploring technologies aimed at alleviating some of humankind's most pressing environmental needs. Israeli scientists had been at the forefront of global research on water resource management and the efficient exploitation of limited arable soil. ISA and France's Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES) had signed an agreement on a joint project aimed at developing, manufacturing and operating a new Earth observation satellite, which was due to be launched in 2009. Israel's cooperation with France reflected a long-established policy of cooperating with other leading space-exploring nations. ISA had signed cooperation agreements with agencies in the United States, France, Canada, Germany, the Russian Federation, India, Ukraine and the Netherlands, and hoped to sign similar agreements with Chile, Brazil and the Republic of Korea. His Government believed that the new frontiers for human endeavour lay in outer space and it commended COPUOS on its efforts to use space technologies for improving quality of life on Earth.

12. **Mr. Taleb (Syrian Arab Republic)** said that it was particularly important to take regional and local capacities and needs into account in implementing the UNISPACE III recommendations. His delegation

believed that greater transparency and wider participation of countries in international cooperation for the peaceful uses of outer space were needed, and it welcomed the assistance provided by the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in that regard to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. He was concerned that the Programme's resources remained limited, however, and called on the donor community to continue to contribute to it. He thanked COPUOS for sponsoring the symposium on "Space and Archaeology" hosted in Damascus by the General Organization of Remote Sensing (GORS) and for its input into the activities of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

13. Given the importance of remote sensing technology for sustainable development, capacity-building with respect to such technology was crucial. His delegation therefore welcomed the West Asia and North Africa projects of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. It also reiterated its emphasis on the dangers posed by space debris. Recent natural disasters had demonstrated the need for a global system for using space technology in disaster management. His delegation saw the Sentinel Asia project as an important initiative for improving early warning technology and disseminating it in a non-discriminatory fashion.

14. **Mr. Kazykhanov** (Kazakhstan) said that the fact that his country was home to the world-famous Baikonur space launch facility promoted its space cooperation with other countries. Its projects included the use of space science and technology for environmental protection and cooperation with the Russian Federation in the use of space and aviation technology and remote sensing of the Earth. His Government was working on a law on space activities and a State programme for the development of space activities up to 2020. In cooperation with their partners, Kazakh scientists had built the country's first national geostationary communications and rebroadcasting satellite, making it the second country in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to operate its own satellite in outer space. It was also operating a ground control complex and developing the necessary infrastructure for training national support staff. In 2008, it was scheduled to launch a second satellite and also to complete an ambitious space rocket complex. The Government was also considering a project to develop a space complex for launching

smaller spacecraft for civilian applications. His delegation supported the conclusions in the COPUOS report regarding the need to use space technology for water management, early warning and management of emergencies and environmental monitoring.

15. **Mr. Siegel** (United States of America) noted that, in the past year, the COPUOS Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space had made significant progress in identifying implementation options for establishing a framework for the safety of planned and foreseeable nuclear power source applications and that the Joint Technical Workshop on that subject, organized jointly with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had concluded its work successfully. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's Working Group on Space Debris had also made significant progress and his delegation looked forward to the adoption at the Subcommittee's next session of its draft space debris mitigation guidelines, which were based on the Guidelines of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC). His delegation also looked forward to the International Heliophysical Year 2007, which would focus attention on the importance of international cooperation in research activities in the field of solar-terrestrial physics.

16. His delegation understood that there was considerable support for the establishment of a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER), but believed that it must be funded on the basis of voluntary contributions and not have an impact on the regular budget of the United Nations. The United States agencies responsible for disaster early warning and mitigation would not contribute resources to SPIDER, but their products would continue to be made available in disaster situations.

17. The COPUOS Legal Subcommittee's Working Group on the Practice of States and International Organizations Registering Space Objects had produced a promising preliminary report and the Legal Subcommittee's document on the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects had highlighted the benefits of adhering to the existing international legal framework governing outer space.

18. **Mr. Tarragô** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the States members and associate members of the Southern

Common Market (MERCOSUR), said that outer space must be considered the common heritage of humankind and be used rationally and peacefully for the collective benefit of current and future generations. Countries with greater space technology capacities, and the international community in general, must ensure universal access to its benefits.

19. Welcoming the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/61/20), he noted that COPUOS was responsible for ensuring that outer space continued to be used for peaceful purposes, taking particular account of the needs of developing countries. He welcomed the inclusion of the item "Space and water" on the COPUOS agenda and looked forward to the consideration of draft space debris mitigation guidelines at the forty-fourth session of the COPUOS Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

20. The recommendations of UNISPACE III must be implemented and international space law, including treaties relating to the peaceful practical applications of space science and technology, should be developed further. Accordingly, he welcomed the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Working Group of the Whole in connection with the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, in particular those on promoting universal access to space communications services, the use of space technology for sustainable development, innovative funding mechanisms and the execution of experimental projects.

21. The United Nations Programme on Space Applications should focus on areas of priority for developing countries, ensuring local support for the use of space technology. It was essential to develop research for natural disaster prevention and he therefore supported the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) space programme and plans for increased international cooperation in using satellites and meteorology for climate monitoring. While MERCOSUR members and associate members would not oppose a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER), they emphasized that it should not replace other international initiatives such as the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS).

22. He welcomed the identification of priority areas by COPUOS and its Scientific and Technical

Subcommittee and, in particular, the inclusion of the item "International cooperation in promoting the use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development", designed to build developing countries' capacities in that area. Countries had a right to infrastructures for receiving, processing and using space-derived geospatial data and human resources training and increased international cooperation were fundamental for achieving that objective.

23. Turning to the report of the COPUOS Legal Subcommittee, he stressed the importance of enforcing and expanding on the existing international treaties relating to outer space. It was also important to create regional cooperation and coordination mechanisms and, in that regard, he welcomed the holding of the Fifth Space Conference of the Americas in Ecuador in June 2006. The Government of Guatemala would host the Sixth Space Conference of the Americas in 2009. He welcomed the establishment by the Government of Colombia of the Colombian Space Commission, which would advance geospace knowledge and technology in the region and their use in promoting sustainable development. Lastly, he noted that the next Chairman of COPUOS would be from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

24. **Mr. Ma Xinmin (China)** said that COPUOS should make its contribution to the development and improvement of the legal regime on the prevention of the militarization and weaponization of outer space and of an arms race in outer space. While independent innovation was important for advancing the peaceful uses of outer space, international cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit was also essential.

25. After six years of discussions, the establishment of a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) was a practical step towards the implementation of the UNISPACE III recommendations. His Government supported the idea of placing SPIDER under OOSA and dividing its activities between offices in Beijing and Bonn. It would be providing free office premises, expert and support staff and part of the funding for the Beijing office. His Government also attached importance to space cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and therefore welcomed the progress towards ratification of the Convention setting up the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO), which it hoped

would become another success story in regional cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

26. The year 2006 marked the fiftieth anniversary of China's aerospace industry, which had remained true to its principles of using space technology to broaden knowledge, promote social progress for the benefit of humankind, meet the needs of economic, scientific and technological development and serve the needs of national security. Under its eleventh five-year plan (2006-2010), China's priority was to transform its aerospace industry from serving business needs to developing and operating satellites in such areas as communications, navigation and remote sensing, as well as to engaging in cooperation in the application of space science and technology.

27. **Mr. Kumaran** (India) welcomed the progress achieved by COPUOS at its forty-ninth session. Developing countries were facing a number of challenges that could be met potentially if their capacities to use the results of space research for economic, social and cultural development were strengthened. The United Nations Programme on Space Applications played an important role in that regard. Since maximizing existing space capacities for disaster management was also important, he welcomed the establishment of a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER), which would have to operate in conjunction with ground-based systems.

28. India's space programme was designed to provide for the country's socio-economic development. To that end, specific user-driven programmes had been undertaken in the areas of remote sensing, meteorology and communication satellite systems. The communication satellite INSAT-4A had been launched recently to meet the demand for direct satellite television broadcasting and tele-education, telemedicine and village resource centre (VRC) networks had been expanded. His Government also attached importance to the use of space-based systems for water and forest resources management and remote sensing data were being used to monitor surface water, irrigation, snow and glaciers and changes in forest cover, enabling conservation measures to be planned. Other major space application programmes included crop estimates and fisheries forecasting.

29. International cooperation, particularly South-South cooperation, was an important component of

India's space programme. the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) provided expertise to developing countries in the application of space technology and India's Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for the Asia and Pacific Region conducted postgraduate and other courses benefiting scholars from many such countries. A connectivity mission had been launched between India and the countries of the African Union, providing for tele-education, telemedicine, e-governance, e-commerce, resource mapping and meteorological services and linking African and Indian hospitals and centres of learning. A pilot project had been implemented in Ethiopia, and it was planned to subsequently link Ghana and the Seychelles.

30. India had been an active member of COPUOS since its inception and had participated in a variety of global cooperation programmes. As a member agency of the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters", ISRO had contributed significantly to disaster response. The effective use of space applications was important for overall prosperity, and it was everyone's responsibility to maintain outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes. He therefore stressed the urgent importance of developing guidelines to regulate the unrestricted availability of high-resolution images of sensitive areas of all countries in the public domain, in particular on the Internet.

31. **Mr. Abiodun** (Nigeria) welcomed the significant progress made by COPUOS on a number of issues in 2006. Nigeria's National Space Research and Development Agency was a member agency of the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters" and the Government was organizing a number of national activities to mark the International Heliophysical Year 2007. In the context of regional cooperation, Nigeria was host to the African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education-English (ARCSSTE-E) and in November 2005 had hosted the first African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development. South Africa and Algeria would be hosting the second and third such conferences in 2007 and 2009, respectively.

32. He welcomed the continuing work of COPUOS on space applications issues that were relevant to all countries, such as space and education, space and water and space and archaeology. He looked forward to the discussions on "Space and society" and "International

cooperation in promoting the use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development" to be held at the fiftieth session of COPUOS and to the Committee on Space Research/International Astronautical Federation (COSPAR/IAF) symposium on "The use of the equatorial orbit for space application: challenges and opportunities" that would take place during the forty-fourth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

33. Lastly, he called on COPUOS to address the issue of non-attendance by a number of its permanent members. Members States that continued to request their regional partners to support their membership, while failing, year after year, to attend COPUOS sessions, should be held accountable. Non-members, particularly those that attended regularly as observers, had a right to a response on that issue.

34. **Mr. Kryzhanivskiy** (Ukraine) said that his Government had implemented measures aimed at establishing cooperation to promote the peaceful uses of outer space. It also sought to promote and strengthen the scientific and engineering capacity of its domestic space industry. In that connection, Ukraine developed and produced space vehicles for peaceful purposes and belonged to the group of seven countries that launched their space launch vehicles regularly. In 2006, efforts had been focused on creating favourable conditions under international law for Ukrainian space sector businesses to participate in international space projects.

35. Ukraine recognized the global nature of the problem of man-made space debris and contributed actively to the efforts of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC), of which its National Space Agency was a member. It paid particular attention to the mitigation of space debris and its spacecraft and spacelaunch vehicles were being modernized to take account of IADC recommendations in that regard.

36. The commercialization of outer space activities had weakened the regulatory function of international space law. With a view to building capacity in that area, his Government would host a workshop on "Status, applications and progressive development of international and national space law" in November 2006. It supported the drafting of a comprehensive convention on international space law.

37. **Ms. Lyubalina** (Russian Federation) said that, in view of the fact that COPUOS was the only body in a

position to regulate peaceful activities in outer space at the global level, her delegation urged that its role in developing political and legal instruments for space activities should be enhanced. At the same time, its work and that of its Legal and Scientific and Technical Subcommittees, should be streamlined and made more efficient. Above all, COPUOS should take advantage of its unique position to undertake a comprehensive review of ways and means of ensuring that outer space was used only for peaceful purposes. Her delegation was concerned that there were still no guarantees against the launching of weapons into space. It was unacceptable that outer space should become an area of armed confrontation or an arms race.

38. She drew attention to a Russian proposal, which had received wide support, that the Committee should draft a comprehensive convention on international space law. Such a convention was long overdue.

39. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that outer space should remain clear of any object that posed a threat to humankind. He urged all States, particularly those with major space capabilities, to make every effort to prevent an arms race in outer space.

40. The growing gulf between developed and developing countries in their science and space technology capacities should be bridged by sharing information and by increasing international and regional cooperation. The Iranian Space Agency (ISA) had been established in February 2004 for that purpose and also to enable the country to benefit from space science and technology for peaceful purposes. The Agency, which came under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, had started to play a significant role in enhancing international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region. In that connection, it had hosted a number of seminars and workshops. In May 2004, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA), it had organized a regional workshop on the use of space technology for environmental security, disaster rehabilitation and sustainable development. Participants from all over the world had decided to establish a regional task force for knowledge sharing, with ISA as its coordinator. The Agency had also organized, in cooperation with the Inter-Islamic Network on Space Sciences and Technology and with support from the Islamic Development Bank, an international seminar on satellite technology

applications in communications and remote sensing. In September 2005, the Eleventh Intergovernmental Consultative Committee Meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific had been held in Isfahan, while in November 2005, the Agency, in cooperation with OOSA and the World Health Organization, had held a seminar on telehealth, at which a network of medical, hygiene and disaster relief specialists, as well as space technology experts, had been established under the supervision of OOSA. Lastly, a seminar on space law was to be held in Tehran in the near future.

41. National projects and programmes had also been carried out or were planned, including studies of groundwater distribution, Persian Gulf pollution and surface-level changes in the Caspian Sea, a small multi-mission satellite project and the Zohreh and Mesbah satellite projects. The Islamic Republic of Iran was also one of the founding members of APSCO.

42. Space technologies could be particularly useful in the risk assessment, mitigation, preparedness and early warning phases of natural disasters management. In order to enable developing countries to use space technology-based solutions, it was imperative to increase awareness and build national capacity. Countries such as his own that were subject to severe natural disasters could benefit greatly by such technologies as early warning systems. Science and technology could also be useful in the efficient management of natural resources in general and water resources in particular. He therefore strongly supported the efforts of COPUOS to fund appropriate scientific solutions to existing water problems. In particular, his delegation supported the application of space science and technology to water management in arid and semi-arid lands, water pollution monitoring, monitoring of the environment of wetlands, mitigation of the effects of extreme water-related events and the scientific understanding of the water cycle.

43. His delegation supported the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III and favoured closer links between COPUOS and the Commission on Sustainable Development, which could contribute to the implementation of those recommendations. The action teams established by COPUOS members were also useful in that regard.

44. **Ms. Wülker-Mirbach** (Germany) said that disaster prevention and management were priorities for her delegation, which welcomed the COPUOS proposal to establish a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER). Her Government felt that it could make a contribution by hosting a SPIDER office in Bonn. Access by all countries to the whole range of space-based information would provide disaster management support and facilitate capacity-building and institutional strengthening in developing countries. The Platform should receive wider support both in kind and in cash and should be funded from the regular budget of the United Nations. There was no reason why it should duplicate the work of GEOSS. On the contrary, the two programmes could cooperate.

45. **Mr. González** (Chile) said that, at the Fifth Space Conference of the Americas, the Latin American countries had made a crucially important decision to cooperate on gaining access to space technology, one of the benefits of which was its potential contribution to the eradication of poverty. The Conference had been well organized, but he had been disappointed by the lack of participation by one North American country — not the United States — which had sent no representative. United Nations participation had also been meagre, although the Government of Ecuador, which had hosted the Conference, had set aside a day for consultation with United Nations agencies before the Conference. The United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had attended the preparatory meeting, but not the Conference itself.

46. He commended the work of OOSA in developing United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) and expressed his delegation's support for GEOSS.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.